

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Prior to taking up the subject application for a first action on the merits, please add the claims to the elected invention as follows:

1. (Original) A computer implemented method for controlling a commercial environment, said commercial environment comprising a plurality of traders, each of said traders included in at least one of a plurality of members, wherein said plurality of members are included in at least one of a plurality of communities, said method comprising the steps of:

defining which of said plurality of members are included in at least one of said communities;

defining which of said plurality of traders are included in which of said plurality of members, and

allowing at least one of said traders to authorize at least one of

- a) interaction between a first of said traders and a second of said traders, and
- b) interaction between a first of said member and a second of said members.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

designating at least one of said communities in which said first and second of said traders are allowed to interact, wherein interaction between said first and second of said traders is prohibited unless said first and second of said traders belong to said designated community.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein ones of said members are included in more than one of said communities.

4. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

allowing said ones of said traders to authorize interaction between any of said traders and ones of said members.

5-22 (Withdrawn) ✓

23. (Added) A computer implemented method of controlling a commercial environment, said environment comprising a plurality of traders, ones of said traders included in at least one of a plurality of members, wherein said plurality of members are included in at least one of a plurality of communities, said method comprising the steps of:

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- a) defining which of said members are included in at least one of said communities;
  - b) defining which of said traders are included in at least one of said communities;
  - c) defining which of at least one of said members is linked to at least one of another of said members of said communities;
  - d) defining which of at least one of said traders is linked to said at least one of said communities; and
  - e) allowing ones of said traders and ones of said member to interact within the at least one of the communities based on steps (a) through (d).

24. (Added) The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of defining one of said traders which is linked to another of said traders.

25. (Added) The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of defining which of said traders is linked to one of said members.

26. (Added) A computer implemented method of controlling a commercial environment, said environment comprising a plurality of traders, each of said traders included in at least one of a plurality of members, wherein said plurality of members defines a community, said method comprising the steps of:

creating a database

restricting access of at least one of said traders to a portion of said database based on at least one of:

a first definition of a first relationship between said trader to at least one of said members, and

a second definition of a second relationship between said trader to at least one of another of said traders.

27. (Added) The method of claim 26, further comprising restricting access of at least one of said traders to a portion of said database based on a definition of a third relationship between said trader to said community.

28. (Added) The method of claim 26, wherein said plurality of members defines a plurality of communities which includes said community.

29. (Added) An apparatus for controlling a commercial environment, said environment comprising a plurality of traders, each of said traders included in at least one of a plurality of members, wherein said plurality of members are included in at least one of a plurality of communities, said apparatus comprising:

a member table for defining which of said plurality of members are included in at least one of said communities;

a trader table for defining which of said plurality of traders are included in which of said plurality of members, and

an authorization table for allowing at least one of said traders to authorize at least one of:

- a) interaction between a first of said traders and a second of said traders, and
- b) interaction between a first of said member and a second of said members.

30. (Added) The apparatus of claim 29, wherein said authorization table is further designates at least one of said communities in which said first and second of said traders are allowed to interact, wherein interaction between said first and second of said traders is prohibited unless said first and second of said traders belong to said designated community.

31. (Added) The apparatus of claim 29, wherein ones of said members are included in more than one of said communities.

32. (Added) The apparatus of claim 29, wherein said authorization table is further allows said ones of said traders to authorize interaction between any of said traders and ones of said members.

33. (Added) A computer system for controlling a commercial environment, said environment comprising a plurality of traders, ones of said traders included in at least one of a plurality of members, wherein said plurality of members are included in at least one of a plurality of communities, said system comprising:

a members table for defining which of said members are included in at least one of said communities;

a traders table for defining which of said traders are included in at least one of said communities;

a further members table for defining which of at least one of said members is linked to at least one of another of said members of said communities; and

a further traders table for defining which of at least one of said traders is linked to said at least one of said communities;

wherein ones of said traders and ones of said member to interact within the at least one of the communities based definitions included in said members tables, said traders table, said further members table and said further traders table.

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34. (Added) The system of claim 33, wherein ones of said members are included in more than one of said communities.

35. (Added) The system of claim 33, further comprising an additional traders table for defining one of said traders which is linked to another of said traders.

36. (Added) The system of claim 33, further comprising an additional traders table for defining which one of said traders which is linked to another of said members.

37. (Added) A computer system for controlling a commercial environment, said environment comprising a plurality of traders, each of said traders included in at least one of a plurality of members, wherein said plurality of members defines a community, said system comprising:

a database which indicates restricting of access of at least one of said traders to a portion of said database based on at least one of:

- a) a first definition of a first relationship between said trader to at least one of said members, and
  - b) a second definition of a second relationship between said trader to at least one of another of said traders; and
- a processing unit for restricting of access based on the content of said database.

a/ 38. (Added) The system of claim 37, wherein access is restricted to at least one of said traders to a portion of said database based on a definition of a third relationship between said trader to said community.

39. (Added) The system of claim 37, wherein said plurality of members defines a plurality of communities which includes said community.